

# Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (March 14), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 58 patients (30 male and 28 female, aged 2 to 91) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 121 patients under isolation currently. So far, 81 patients who had COVID-19 confirmed or probable infection have been discharged upon recovery.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

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## Buildings Department counter services arrangement

The Buildings Department (BD) announced today (March 14) that the opening hours of the Receipt Counter and the Enquiry Counter at the ground floor and the Building Information Centre (BIC) at 2/F of the BD Headquarters at North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, will return to normal starting from next Monday (March 16). Details are as follows:

1. the Receipt Counter will receive documents between 8.30am and 5.30pm from Monday to Friday (except on public holidays) and the Enquiry Counter will handle enquiries from members of the public between 8.30am and 5.30pm from Monday to Thursday and from 8.30am to 6pm on Friday (except on public holidays); and
2. the BIC will be open between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday (except on public holidays) for inspection and copying services for private building records.

There will be limits on the number of people to be served at any one time in order to reduce social contact.

The Receipt and Dispatch Counter (R&D Counter) of the BD's New Buildings

Divisions at 7/F, 14 Taikoo Wan Road, Taikoo Shing, Hong Kong, will be open from 8.30am to 5.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (except on public holidays) for receiving statutory submissions and related documents and forms for new building works. The applicants can collect the processed plans and related documents from the R&D Counter on Tuesday or Thursday (except on public holidays) by appointment made by the department.

The meeting rooms (except for meetings essential to meet statutory requirements and recruitment interviews) and the interview rooms in the BD's offices will continue to be not open to the public until further notice.

The BD appeals to the public to minimise visiting the department's offices in person unless they genuinely require its public services urgently. The public can call 1823 to make emergency reports. For general enquiries and other reports, they may call 1823 or inform the department by email ([enquiry@bd.gov.hk](mailto:enquiry@bd.gov.hk)), online reporting ([eform.one.gov.hk/form/bd0001/en](http://eform.one.gov.hk/form/bd0001/en)), fax (2537 4992) or post (BD Headquarters, North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon). In addition, electronic information can be submitted to the department via [receipt@bd.gov.hk](mailto:receipt@bd.gov.hk).

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## [Hong Kong Customs urges public to stop using four types of surgical masks suspected of exceeding bacterial limit \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (March 14) appealed to members of the public to stop using four types of surgical masks as test results revealed that the bacterial counts of those four types of surgical masks exceeded the maximum permitted limit. Traders should take off the products from the shelves as well. Customs is proactively looking into the source of those surgical masks.

Customs launched a large-scale territory-wide special operation codenamed "Guardian" on January 27 this year to conduct spot checks, test purchases and inspections in various districts on surgical masks available in the market. Samples of masks were also sent to the laboratory for tests on bacterial counts. Customs yesterday (March 13) received the test results of the latest batch of 24 test-purchased samples. According to the relevant hygienic standard for disposable sanitary products, the total bacterial counts of four types of surgical masks samples exceeded the maximum permitted limit by 0.4 to 11.5 times, in contravention of the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO).

The four types of surgical masks were packed in boxes of 50 pieces each,

with the selling price ranging from \$200 to \$499. Two of the samples are labelled with manufacturing place as Turkey and Nepal, while the remaining two had no such labels. It is believed that the two types of surgical masks without labelling manufacturing place came from South-east Asian countries according to initial investigation.

Noted the test results, Customs conducted immediate enforcement action and searched four pharmacies located in Causeway Bay and Wan Chai today. Four directors suspected of violating the CGSO were arrested. No further seizure of the four types of surgical masks suspected of exceeding the limit of total bacterial count was made. The arrested three men and one woman, aged between 28 and 40, are now being detained for further investigation.

Apart from the four pharmacies in connection with the cases, Customs officers also checked multiple retail spots in various districts today and no such products were found for sale. Customs is undertaking in-depth investigation on the source of those surgical masks. Likelihood of further arrest is not excluded.

Wearing those surgical masks exceeding the limit of total bacterial count for a long period of time may lead to facial discomfort. Elderly or young children with relatively weaker body resistance or people with weakened immune systems are more easy to have respiratory infection in contact with bacteria, leading to potential health risk. As such, members of the public should stop using surgical masks of the same type as those involved in the case immediately.

Customs will further examine the four types of surgical masks to establish the type of bacteria present.

To date, Customs has already test-purchased over 90 types of surgical masks for tests on bacterial count. The first three batches of 60 samples of surgical masks have passed the tests on bacterial counts and complied with the bacterial count standard. Customs will continue to conduct relevant test-purchases and tests.

Customs reminds members of the public to observe the following tips when purchasing and using surgical masks:

- Check the package of surgical masks to see if there is any damage or dirt;
- Stop using surgical masks with stain or odd smell;
- Pay attention to the proper way of using surgical masks;
- Change surgical masks at suitable time;
- Store surgical masks at dry places; and
- Purchase at reputable retail shops.

The "Guardian" operation, which has been running for 47 days as of yesterday since its launch on January 27. More than 3 200 officers have been mobilised to conduct over 22 000 inspections at retail spots in various districts to ensure that common protective items sold in the market comply

with the CGSO and the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

The "Guardian" operation is ongoing. Customs will continue to take a speedy and holistic approach to combat supply and sale of anti-epidemic items violating relevant ordinances. The department will also continue to make prompt public updates if any irregularities are detected.

Under the CGSO, it is an offence to import, manufacture or supply consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on a subsequent conviction.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the CGSO or the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)). Customs will look into every complaint received and take any necessary follow-up action.



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## USFH speaks on health quarantine arrangements

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, after attending a radio programme today

(March 14):

Reporter: Can you explain to us the Government's rationale when it decided not to include UK in the announcement last night? Regarding the announcement last night, why is it just home quarantine arrangement instead of an entry ban for European countries? Why home quarantine, not quarantine centre?

Under Secretary for Food and Health: We have been looking very closely at the trend of development of COVID-19 infection since the outbreak happened. According to observation, there is an obvious trend of increase in cases and also sharp increase in cases in a number of countries, especially those in Europe. Of course, apart from Europe, we also notice there are a number of isolated imported cases from other parts of the world, for example, America, and also the tour groups from Egypt and India. Taking into account all observation, we would like to include European countries first at this stage in issuing Outbound Travel Alert to the Schengen Area and also to Egypt because there is a group of tourists involving Hong Kong residents coming back to Hong Kong being infected. We have been watching very closely the trend of development in any part of the world apart from the Schengen Area in Europe. We would not exclude any additional measure towards other countries.

Reporter: Why home quarantine but not quarantine centre?

Under Secretary for Food and Health: Regarding the arrangement of quarantine, we have different locations that we can implement quarantine, that is quarantine centre and the other measure is home quarantine. As the number of quarantine facilities may be limited and also the establishment may need time, we have to prioritise the use of quarantine facilities to cater for those, for example, close contacts of confirmed cases. For the relatively less risky cases, we think home quarantine is also the acceptable measure.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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## **Latest arrangements for HAD services**

To align with the implementation of targeted measures to reduce social contact and other infection control measures as well as gradually resume more public services by the Government in an orderly manner, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) announced today (March 14) the latest arrangements for its services from March 16 (Monday). The details are listed below.

The operating hours of the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres (except for the Sham Shui Po Home Affairs Enquiry Centre, which closed earlier for maintenance works) and the Estate Beneficiaries Support Unit will return to normal.

The multi-purpose halls of all community halls and community centres will continue to be open to organisations with approved bookings, with limits on the number of participants for activities to be held in order to ensure that appropriate social distancing can be maintained among them.

The operation of the HAD's enquiry hotline (2835 2500) and the services provided by the Office of the Licensing Authority returned to normal earlier.